

research snapshot

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What Impact Can a Global Network Have on Collaborative Research?

What is this research about?

The Refugee Research Network's (RRN) goal is to create and share information to help people who have been forced to leave their home countries. They are working towards this goal by:

- Gaining an understanding of refugee issues on a global scale.
- Helping to share information easily among practitioners, researchers and community members.
- Working to inform policies and practices that respond to refugee needs on national and international levels.

The paper contrasts the benefits and struggles of doing collaborative research locally and internationally. The authors describe in detail the challenges faced by the RRN to demonstrate how these challenges and benefits are experienced in an international network. Global power differences among international partners need to be looked at in collaborative and engaged research just as they are in community/university partnerships. For example, international funding opportunities often result in wealthy countries (North) having greater control over funding and project goals than partners from less wealthy countries (South). This mirrors the imbalance often observed between university and community partners. However, not all solutions for community and university cooperation can be adapted for North

What you need to know:

There are a number of barriers to doing collaborative research in a global context. The Refugee Research Network has been trying to support collaborative research. Their members still experience challenges in building relationships and collaborating. People working on global projects should remember that partners have access to different resources, communication may not always be easy and shared goal development is needed but difficult to accomplish.

and South collaborations as these situations are not identical.

What did the researchers do?

A literature review was completed exploring common issues found in community and university collaborations. Members of the RRN were interviewed by phone about the benefits and barriers to participation in the network. Twelve members of the RRN were interviewed, nine of whom were from the North and three from the South. The interviews were then analysed to find common themes.

What did the researchers find?

The RRN members indicated common themes; however, the impact of some were experienced more

strongly by those in the South than in the North. Among the common benefits listed below, those with an asterisk differed between the Northern and the Southern members.

1. Creating and sharing new information.
2. Networking with other people working on refugee studies.
3. * Reaching out to groups who would benefit from the information (more important for North).
4. Having a greater social impact.
5. * Connecting to the RRN created better reputation (more important for South).

Common barriers to participation expressed by RRN members are listed below. Those that differed between the North and South are identified with an asterisk.

1. * Different groups have access to different resources, such as time and funding (more of a problem for the South).
2. Awareness of the needs of different groups as the environment and resources change.
3. * Issues with people communicating, such as when language and time zones change (more of a problem for the South).
4. * Access to needed technology to engage with other groups (more of a problem for the South).
5. Clear goals will help groups engaged with RRN to know what to expect.

How can you use this research?

Researchers who plan to do global collaborative research will benefit from the experiences of the RRN. The paper outlines barriers that must be managed to have a successful cooperation with global partners.

About the Researchers

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